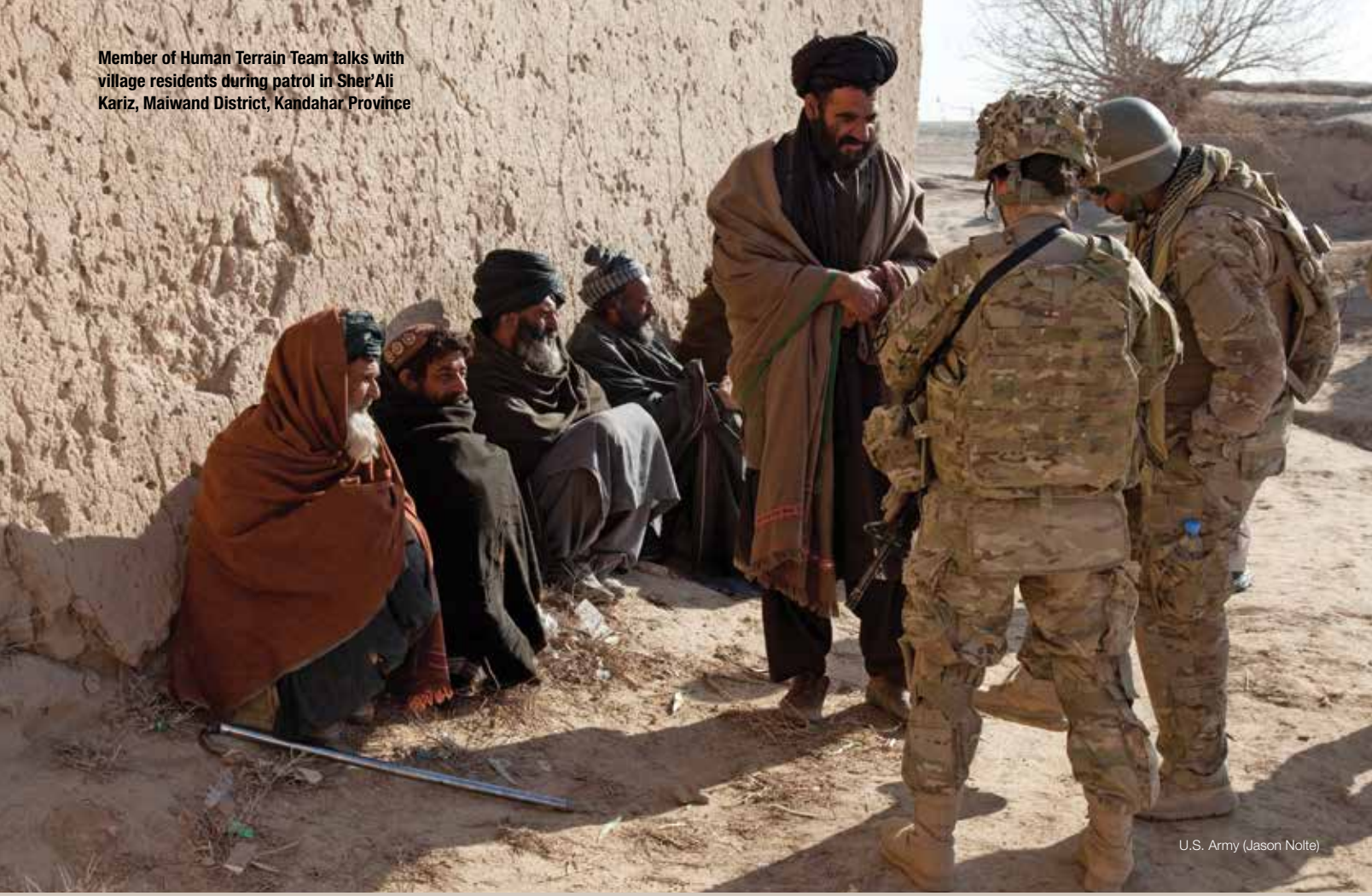

Member of Human Terrain Team talks with village residents during patrol in Sher'Ali Kariz, Maiwand District, Kandahar Province

U.S. Army (Jason Nolte)

THE WAY AHEAD FOR Human Terrain Teams

By CHRISTOPHER J. LAMB, JAMES DOUGLAS ORTON, MICHAEL C. DAVIES, *and* THEODORE T. PIKULSKY

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General Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army, learned from his three combat tours in Iraq that the U.S. military needs to better understand local populations and their social, political, and cultural attributes. He concluded that the more we understand the human domain, the less combat force it takes to prevail in counterinsurgency.[1] Similarly, during his confirmation hearing before taking command of U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Afghanistan in June 2010, General David Petraeus told Congress that the decisive terrain in counterinsurgency was "the human terrain."[2] These leaders understand that effective counterinsurgency requires protecting and eliciting cooperation from the population—the human terrain—which, in turn, requires a keen understanding of the population's social and cultural characteristics.

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The Army created Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) to provide combat forces in Afghanistan and Iraq with knowledge of the *human terrain*, or put differently, "sociocultural knowledge." HTTs are small, cross-functional teams of specially trained military officers, research managers, and civilian social scientists that are typically appended to brigade-sized units. If HTTs do their job well, they can advise commanders on how to win popular support and isolate insurgents. If HTTs perform poorly, or are used unwisely or ignored by commanders, military operations are more likely to alienate populations and make success unattainable. The performance of HTTs is therefore intrinsically important both now in Afghanistan and in any future military operations against irregular forces.

In the past, the U.S. military has been slow to recognize the need for sociocultural knowledge, much less to institutionalize the capability to provide it. Now, however, with senior officers believing that the military must retain the means to generate sociocultural knowledge to be well prepared for the future security environment, the key issue is how to do it well and efficiently. The place to begin answering that question is with a rigorous, balanced, and evidence-based evaluation of past HTT performance. If leaders understand this performance over the past decade, it is much more likely they will be able to provide ready and reliable knowledge of human terrain to U.S. forces in the future. Toward that end, this article summarizes a major study conducted at National Defense University (NDU) that offers an explanation for past HTT performance and makes recommendations on how to build on that experience.

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Evaluating Performance

The Human Terrain System (HTS), which deploys HTTs, was formed in 2006 under the supervision of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). HTS deployed its first team to Khost, Afghanistan, in early 2007. Although it took time for the team to establish its relevance, it eventually won over the brigade's commanding officer, who gave the team a glowing endorsement that captured the attention of Congress.[3] Later, it became apparent that while HTTs often did good work and were widely appreciated by commanders, they were slow to provide value, inconsistent in performance, and insufficient in number. Ultimately, the HTTs failed to ameliorate growing cross-cultural tensions between U.S. forces and Afghans and were unable to make a major contribution to the counter-insurgency effort.[4] Eventually, performance concerns precipitated a number of internal and external reviews of HTS and HTTs.

Commanders viewed HTT performance differently than others. Most commanders, when asked, state that their HTTs are quite useful, while HTT members themselves—those who have studied them and those charged with their oversight—are more likely to state that HTT performance is variable. The new study from NDU explains the origins of the performance variation, why the large majority of commanders found HTTs useful, and why HTTs collectively were unable to make a major contribution to the counterinsurgency effort. It also explains the tremendous challenges the HTS program faced in starting and rapidly expanding a nontraditional military program and why some challenges were met successfully while others were not. This article identifies HTS management challenges with an in-depth history of the program and provides an internal assessment of HTT performance based on 10 key small-team performance factors.[5]

Any study of HTTs must address the criteria for evaluating their performance. Previous studies agree that HTT performance should be judged by how well a team provides sociocultural knowledge to improve a commander's decisionmaking. They also agree that feedback from commanders is the primary means of making that assessment.[6] Our study used this criterion and these data, but also considered performance evaluations from other sources. The study relied on interviews with more than 100 team members, former HTS managers, commanders, and other experts to assess the factors that best explain variations in team performance. Before analyzing team performance, however, we first developed a detailed chronology of HTS history and management issues.

Historical Overview of HTS

A former HTS director acknowledged some of the controversy surrounding the program when she observed that the "HTS story is one of challenges, rewards, stumbles, and successes."[7] The hundreds of articles written about HTS are polarized around advocates who focus too much on the program's rewards and successes and critics who emphasize its challenges and stumbles. To conduct a rigorous study of HTS, it was first necessary to generate a thorough and balanced history that recognizes program achievements without ignoring shortcomings. That history can be summarized as a set of sometimes overlapping developmental periods.

The first period, gestation, began following the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, when the need to understand human terrain in order "to help narrow the search space for terrorists and terror groups"[8] became evident. The momentum for more investigation in sociocultural knowledge increased after the intervention in Iraq when experts pointedly told Congress the United States did not have sufficient knowledge of the human terrain to conduct a counterinsurgency operation.[9] However, it was not until 2005 that a new organization supporting warfighters funded an effort to produce a device that would store information about the human terrain of a defined area including the social networks involved in the production and placement of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Several HTS progenitors convinced the Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) that the solution required a nontechnological component with human experts, a shift in perspective that advanced further when 10th Mountain Division submitted an operational needs statement in late 2005 requesting such a capability.[10]

The second HTS phase began with its actual birth in June 2006 when JIEDDO officially agreed to fund five test teams.[11] Getting the HTS program off the ground proved difficult and time-consuming. HTS leaders had to quickly recruit a management team and find a way to field teams to test the concept. Rapidly hiring 25 people to populate the first experimental teams was not possible, so by September the number was scaled down to a single team to be fielded in early 2007.

U.S. Army (Charles M. Willingham)

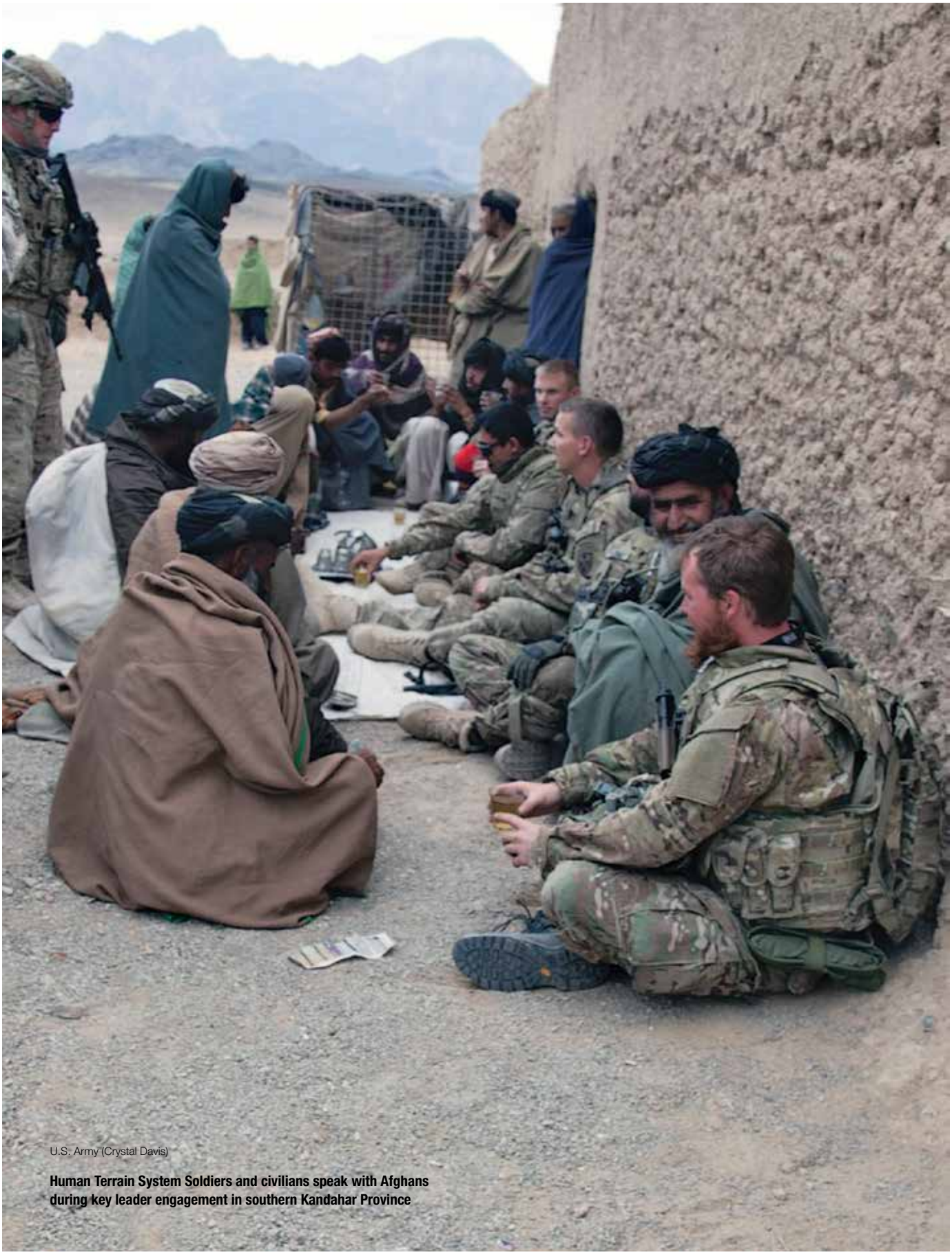
Human Terrain Team social scientist with interpreter inspect conditions at U.S. Department of Defense–funded Al-Arshad Desert School Agricultural Research Center, Najaf Province, Iraq

The third developmental stage of the program was its proof of concept. The 82nd Airborne Division agreed to test the first experimental HTT with one of its brigades deploying to Afghanistan in early 2007. The HTT, designated AF1, arrived in Afghanistan in February 2007 to join 4th Brigade, 82nd Airborne, in Khost. Initially the brigade had no idea how to use the team. The team members tested a variety of activities to demonstrate their utility, but it was not until Operation *Maiwand* in June 2007 that the brigade realized how useful the HTT could be. The brigade commander and his staff concluded that the HTT's work with the population in advance of operations helped reduce kinetic activity and therefore lowered brigade casualties.

Meanwhile, multiple requests from other field commanders coalesced into a Joint Urgent Operational Needs Statement issued by U.S. Central Command in April 2007 that requested 26 HTTs across two theaters of war. The original HTS model for developing HTTs changed with the sudden increase in demand. Previously, HTS management focused on the need to create, field, and test the experimental team in Afghanistan.[12] Now there was little time to analyze the AF1 experience critically. Instead, the replacement team for AF1 and five new teams that were quickly being trained and deployed to Iraq became the proof-of-concept effort for the HTS program. The performance of the five Iraq teams, IZ1 through IZ5, was mixed. For example, the level of interpersonal conflict on IZ1 was so "untenable" that individual members left the team to work directly with battalions, and IZ5 "fractured" and had to be withdrawn.[13]

Given developments at the theater level, the emphasis on building operational HTT capacity was understandable. The Pentagon was firmly backing new capabilities for irregular warfare. In November 2007, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates cited the program as an example of necessary adaptation for irregular warfare. He noted that bringing in "professional anthropologists as advisors" was healthy and was "having a very real impact."[14] A few months later, after negative depictions emerged, Gates continued to back the program, characterizing any missteps as "attendant growing pains"[15] common in new programs. With U.S. Central Command, General Petraeus, and Secretary Gates all supporting HTS, the nascent effort was safe for the time being and its budget was expanded to cover the costs of deploying more teams.

HTS then entered a period of rapid expansion that its leaders would later describe as a "catastrophic success."[16] HTS managers quickly had to recruit, select, train, and retain qualified personnel to field 26 teams. For one thing, securing quality recruits was a challenge. To attract and select personnel, HTS was obliged to use the existing omnibus contract TRADOC had in place, a contract that was later described by the HTS program manager as "totally and completely inadequate" for this purpose.[17] Consequently, questionable personnel were being screened into the program. Even so, HTS struggled to fully staff the growing



U.S. Army (Crystal Davis)

Human Terrain System Soldiers and civilians speak with Afghans during key leader engagement in southern Kandahar Province

number of teams. In 2008, the program had a 30 percent attrition rate during training that effectively cost $7 million[18] and meant a training cycle had to be about 50 percent larger than absolute demand.

The overwhelming number of trainees who left the program simply quit. Much of their dissatisfaction was attributed to the inadequacy of the training program, and in particular, the poor relationship between the training and the tasks performed in the field. The factors that produced high-quality team performance were unknown, so training involved an element of trial and error. HTS management did not systematically collect feedback from field experience, but adjusted the training curriculum based on its impressions of what worked well in the field. The training was also complicated by variation in class composition. It was not uncommon to have an incoming class with many more team leaders and research managers than social scientists or human terrain analysts. An uneven distribution made it difficult to assemble teams and have them train with brigades prior to deployment.

Recruitment, training, and other management challenges were exacerbated by increasing public criticism. In October 2007, the American Anthropological Association cited perceived ethical shortcomings,[19] and in May 2008, the Society of Applied Anthropology similarly expressed "grave concerns" about the program. Some well-publicized HTT failures in the field worsened the perception that the program was struggling, and it seemed like the tide of informed opinion was turning against it. For example, a July 10, 2008, editorial in *Nature* stated that the program could be a win-win effort for local populations and the U.S. military. Five months later, the influential magazine reversed its position and called for the "swift close" of the program, concluding, "In theory, it is a good idea. . . . In practice, however, it has been a disaster."[20]

In fall 2009, HTS entered a critical yearlong period marked by the need to expand HTTs in the field while management conflicts were on the rise. HTS leaders had to resolve training and retention problems, counter negative publicity, improve HTT performance, and find a way to prevent HTT disasters that alienated commanders and hurt the program's reputation even while overseeing the drawdown of HTTs from Iraq and increasing the number of teams in Afghanistan from 6 to 22. Afghanistan's human terrain was the centerpiece of General Stanley McChrystal's new campaign plan for Afghanistan, and there was great pressure to field capable HTTs there quickly. Congress increased funding to meet the new requirements in Afghanistan, but it also signaled reservations about the program by requiring a study of the management and organization of HTS to be delivered by March 1, 2010.[21] In a March 31 meeting with reporters, Secretary of the Army John McHugh also implied the program was on a probationary status by refusing to endorse it, stating instead that he was "neither happy nor unhappy"[22] with HTS.

While HTS took on these challenges, TRADOC moved to exert more control over the program. TRADOC leaders approved a new contract with the company that HTS thought was the root cause of its recruitment problems and agreed to job descriptions for HTT positions that were not accurate and that complicated recruitment and retention of quality personnel, all without HTS input.[23] TRADOC also initiated two internal investigations of HTS,[24] and finally, in June 2010, replaced the HTS program manager with a trusted insider from the TRADOC staff. Other members of the original HTS team left as well, and soon there was a completely new management team in place that was firmly under TRADOC control.

under the new management team, the program entered a period of more intense Army institutionalization at a precarious time for HTS

Under the new management team, the program entered a period of more intense Army institutionalization at a precarious time for HTS. A month after the new program manager assumed her duties, the study demanded by Congress was delivered to Capitol Hill. The report identified problems regarding TRADOC's management practices. To assuage critics, TRADOC and the new HTS leaders let a new contract with a new company. TRADOC also established new policies and procedures for HTS that it hoped would improve performance.[25]

In retrospect, it seems clear that support from field commanders saved an HTS program under pressure and undergoing wholesale management changes. The report to Congress helpfully noted that combat forces appreciated their HTTs, and when a journalist asked General Petraeus about HTS, he responded by email from Afghanistan: "It is working. I hope it's here to stay."[26] In December 2010, HTS was given a green light from U.S. Central Command to grow the HTT program from 22 to 31 teams by summer 2011.

Several important observations can be made based on this brief history:

- The Pentagon was slow to stand up a program for providing ground force commanders with sociocultural knowledge,[27] deploying the first HTT more than 5 years after Operation *Enduring Freedom* commenced.
- HTS only stood up because another new organization—JIEDDO—had the flexibility to push resources at promising new ideas, and defined its mission broadly to launch a personnel-intensive program in a system primarily focused on new technology.
- TRADOC, an organization that does not normally field units, had trouble meeting the high demand for HTTs from commanders in the field.
- HTS never had a theory of performance, validated by field experience, that it could use to inform its training program or explain the optimum role for HTTs to commanders.
- HTS survived because commanders valued HTTs.

HTS's tenuous existence is unlikely to change. Major cuts in the defense budget are forcing a careful reexamination of all defense programs, especially those perceived as niche capabilities created for recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this environment, sociocultural programs must convince senior leaders that they meet enduring requirements efficiently. In the case of HTS, this requires a compelling explanation for past HTT performance variation. Without understanding the origins of past performance variation, it will be hard for HTS to convince skeptics that it can manage the program to better, more consistent performance in the future.

HTT Performance: An Explanation

To explain HTT performance, it is first necessary to explain why commanders typically rated HTTs more highly than the people who managed or studied them did, and second, to identify the optimum role HTTs could play in an integrated cultural intelligence architecture. It is clear that the large majority of commanders thought their HTTs were useful (see table[28]). However, it is not immediately apparent *why* commanders valued HTTs (or not).

To determine levels of commander expectations for HTT performance, we categorized commander praise and criticisms of HTTs according to three levels of cultural knowledge previously postulated by some subject matter experts.[29] The levels roughly equate to the social science objectives of accurate description, explanation, and prediction:

- First level: Cultural awareness. Basic familiarity with language and religion and an understanding and observance of local norms and boundaries. This roughly equates to good description of human terrain. It was often observed by commanders that such description is needed at the tactical level, down to battalion and company levels if not below.
- Second level: Cultural understanding. The "why" of behavior embodied in perceptions, mindsets, attitudes, and customs. This roughly equates to explanation of human behaviors. Perhaps because brigade commanders were the focus of interviews, it is not surprising that this level of understanding, which presumably is important at all levels, was emphasized at the brigade level.
- Third level: Cultural intelligence. The implications of these behaviors and their drivers. This roughly equates to anticipation of popular behavior. The ability to anticipate reactions can shape theater-level decisionmaking.

Brigade commanders were not predisposed to believe HTTs would make contributions at one level of cultural knowledge or another. They generally had a "wait and see attitude" about HTT performance. However, the majority of those commanders who provided more specific reasoning for why HTTs were helpful underscored their contributions at the first level, noting they provided continuity of situational awareness across multiple brigade deployments and faster situational awareness than was possible without an HTT. They also noted that the teams could help spread this basic situational awareness through their forces by providing training on basic Afghan customs (dos and don'ts) and instruction on how to collect information on human terrain effectively.

Fewer commanders, typically those who worked with the handful of widely acknowledged superlative HTTs, testified that the HTTs contributed at the second level of cultural knowledge. These teams not only helped describe the human terrain, but they also explained the behaviors in ways that helped commanders tailor their brigade operations. In this vein, commanders stated that with HTT help, they could better understand the consequences of their decisions, which facilitated course of action analysis and other benefits, such as:

- reduced friction with the population (which in turn reduced casualties)
- support for political reconciliation by identifying who had power, trust, and resources, and what their motives were
- improved information operations by helping tailor message content and style to reach Afghan audiences better
- better "damage limitation" when untoward events occurred that had to be explained and compensated for with the Afghan populace.

Rarely did brigade commanders assess HTT performance in ways that suggest they were capable of the third level of cultural knowledge, which provides deep insights on the origins and implications of Afghan behaviors and decisionmaking. The best explanation for why U.S. forces need all three levels of cultural knowledge is a 2010 paper by Major General Michael T. Flynn, USA, and other military officers entitled *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*. The paper articulates a cultural intelligence architecture that makes it possible to identify the ideal role for HTTs and to better interpret commander reactions to HTTs in practice.

Fixing Intel notes that in counterinsurgency, "the most salient problems are attitudinal, cultural, and human," and that theater commanders need to keep abreast of these concerns on a daily basis. In a counterinsurgency, small units supply key intelligence to higher commands rather than the other way around. For this reason, all soldiers must be intelligence collectors who enable higher level analysts to create "comprehensive narratives" for each district that "describe changes in the economy, atmospherics, development, corruption, governance, and enemy activity" and "provide the kind of context that is invaluable up the chain of command."[30] However, General Flynn argues that brigade-level commanders

Comparison of Studies Sampling Commander HTT Assessments

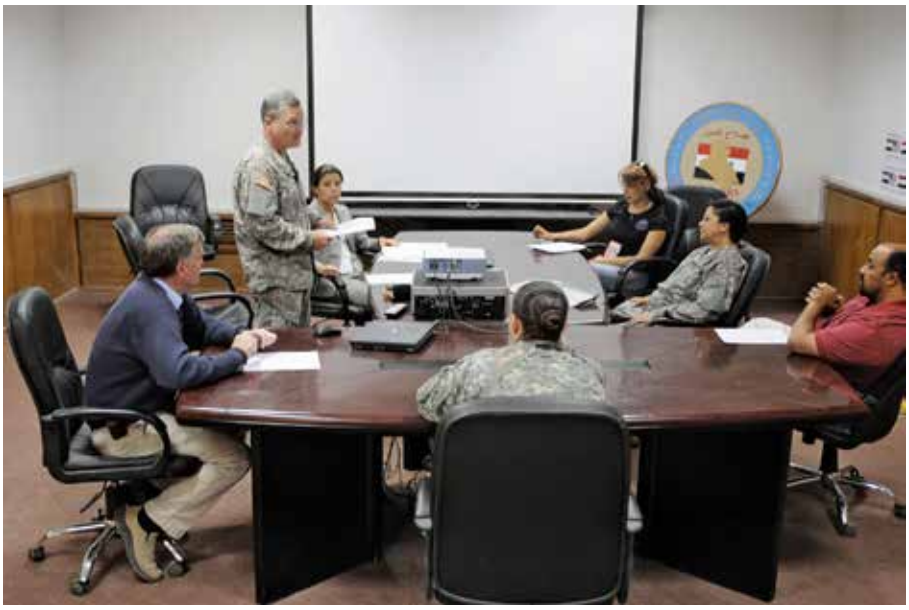
	Successful	Partial Success	No Impact or Ineffective
West Point Study	Highly valued 4		
Center for Naval Analyses Study	Very useful 5	Varied usefulness 8	Not useful 3
Institute for Defense Analyses Study	Success: the Brigade Combat Team could not have been successful without the HTT efforts 26	Partial Success: on balance, the HTT did more good than harm 9	No impact (regardless of reason) 1
National Defense University Study	Effective 8	Mixed effectiveness 4	Not effective 1

must authorize a select group of analysts to retrieve information from the ground level and make it available to a broader audience, similar to the way journalists work. These analysts must leave their chairs and visit the people who operate at the grassroots level—civil affairs officers, [Provincial Reconstruction Teams]*, atmospherics teams, Afghan liaison officers, female engagement teams, willing* [nongovernmental organizations] *and development organizations, United Nations officials, psychological operations teams, human terrain teams, and staff officers with infantry battalions—to name a few.*[31]

In short, primary collection is done at the small unit level where there are "many sensors," and analysis of the diverse descriptive inputs is done at the brigade level, where there are more resources, and then the information is passed along to the regional (or division) level to create a comprehensive composite understanding of the situation.

The Flynn explanation for how the entire force, aided by "select teams of civilian analysts," should produce cultural intelligence helps make sense of the diverse commander assessments of HTT performance. The few, small, and costly HTTs best served brigade commanders at the second level of cultural knowledge rather than being used at the first level as small-unit data collectors. If the teams were used as data collectors, they perhaps pleased commanders but ultimately were too few in number to make a difference. As one brigade commander commented, using HTTs as collectors was like using a squirt gun to fight a forest fire. HTTs cannot serve as a substitute for a larger, more comprehensive effort to collect and analyze cultural intelligence. Instead, the optimum role for HTTs is to perform at the second level of cultural knowledge where they can help explain local human terrain to the command staff and facilitate decisionmaking. HTTs that did so improved brigade command decisionmaking and received the most effusive commander praise.

With the nuances of commander assessments and the optimal role for HTTs clarified, it is easier to make sense of other factors that determined the teams' performance. There were several broad preconditions for HTT productivity, the first of which was beyond the control of HTS and the HTTs:



U.S. Army (Raul Elliott)

Human Terrain System leader and PRT members listen to briefing during meeting at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq

- HTTs had to be appended to a brigade commander and staff that were committed to a population-centric counterinsurgency approach.
- HTTs had to prove to typically skeptical commanders that they could make a contribution.
- HTTs had to overcome the many intrinsic constraints on productivity that characterized the HTS program at the organizational, team, and individual levels.

These preconditions for success underscore several points. First, there are limits to what any sociocultural program can do without a consensus among brigade commanders on the critical importance of human terrain, the role their own troops play in collecting human terrain data, and the analytic capability HTTs are supposed to provide to the brigade staffs as part of a larger, theater-wide human terrain–centric intelligence architecture. Absent a "whole force" approach to developing and using sociocultural knowledge such as General Flynn envisioned, the ability of HTS or any other small sociocultural teams to make a difference is quite limited.

Moreover, even if brigade commanders were open to the population-centric approach to counterinsurgency that theater commanders were emphasizing—and this has never uniformly been the case[32]—they still took time for HTTs to prove themselves. This reduced efficiency, especially given the yearlong brigade tours for Afghanistan that forced teams to repeatedly adjust to new commanders. In such circumstances, it was important to field cohesive teams that could be immediately productive. Ideally, HTTs should have been given more general expertise on Afghanistan and greater access to specific information about the areas they would operate in as early as possible. They should have been well-functioning teams composed of individuals with diverse expertise that trained together, bonded, and found their place on brigade staffs prior to deployment. They should have relieved predecessor teams in the field with a period of overlap with the outgoing teams, not as individual replacements. They should have had longer periods of deployment to deepen their expertise on local conditions and to permit the desired overlap with relieving HTTs and brigades (see the larger study for a detailed explanation of small cross-functional team performance factors).

For a variety of reasons, none of these conditions applied. Instead, HTTs were conceptualized, created, and managed in a way that made it hard for them to serve as cultural knowledge integrators for brigade commanders. Among other things, quickly winning commanders' confidence was difficult given the way HTTs were raised and trained. Since HTT members were individually assigned to teams after arriving in country, they did not typically have a chance to get to know the other members, much less the brigade commanders and

staffs. Without predeployment training as a team, HTTs could not work out team dynamics in a less stressful environment or establish team decisionmaking processes until they reached the field where each new team member's arrival potentially disrupted established productive team practices. Deploying members singly inadvertently signaled that they were valued as individual assets rather than as teams. In a stressful combat environment, the failure to bond as teams was sometimes crippling.

leaders had to get their teams operating smoothly and prove themselves to commanders quickly since their standard length of deployment was only 9 months

Moreover, the training the teams received was not based on a theory of HTT performance that was tested by feedback from actual in-country experience. Thus, the HTS program had no way to improve HTT learning and prepare teams for the significant challenges they would face. Some teams overcame their interpersonal conflicts and learned how to channel conflict into productive avenues that improved team performance, but many did not. If teams could not resolve conflicts productively, they stood little chance of developing a cohesive team culture or trust. In addition, the quality of HTT recruits was highly variable. Many recruits were alienated during training or joined for the wrong reasons and were unproductive after they deployed. In many cases, team members were not mentally or physically conditioned to operate in hostile or austere environments. In the rush to institute the program, HTS relied on high individual member remuneration, and even so it was hard to find and attract individuals with deep regional and linguistic expertise. Job satisfaction on high-performing small teams is more a function of team bonding and productivity than individual remuneration, but the program was structured to make the former difficult and to rely on the latter.

With so many impediments to high performance, HTTs were critically dependent on stellar and versatile leadership. Leaders had to get their teams operating smoothly and prove themselves to commanders quickly since their standard length of deployment was only 9 months and they had to ensure productivity over time by repeatedly integrating newly arriving members who deployed individually in staggered timeframes rather than as teams. This was a difficult proposition, and unfortunately, HTT leader performance was as variable as HTT performance. Autocratic team leaders were particularly out of place given the composition of the teams and their mission. They were a major factor in notable team failures. Those leaders who were able to overcome the many impediments to HTT effectiveness were indispensable and heroic catalysts who were much admired by their team members. The HTS selection process did not screen team leader candidates for the attributes that correlated with such high performance; their presence was largely a matter of happenstance.

With performance constrained by so many external and internal factors, it is not surprising that it was variable. Even so, most commanders valued HTTs, which is a testimony to the people who populated high-performing HTTs, but also to the general lack of sociocultural knowledge in U.S. military forces that made even limited HTT contributions so necessary and conspicuous.

Future of HTS

The HTT experience demonstrates that it is difficult to develop sociocultural knowledge quickly; difficult to retain, update, and transfer that knowledge between units; and almost impossible to do these things without a well-developed concept for HTT performance that is based on empirical feedback from actual experience in-theater. Thus, the U.S. military needs a standing capability to provide a baseline of sociocultural knowledge that can be rapidly expanded in wartime. HTS and the many similar programs that stood up and proliferated during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq could have been run much more efficiently if they emerged from a standing sociocultural knowledge program designed for that purpose.

Looking to the future, HTS now faces the challenge of transitioning to a standing peacetime sociocultural knowledge capacity that provides a different capability than the HTTs but can expand quickly to generate a HTT-like capability when U.S. forces go to war. To execute this transition, HTS will have to overcome a great deal of organizational inertia. The U.S. military has a strong cultural aversion to irregular warfare and to devoting resources to sociocultural knowledge.[33] This aversion is demonstrated repeatedly as the military abandons sociocultural knowledge and the means to acquire it once conflicts are over. Despite expressions of senior leader support, the HTS program is now being curtailed to save resources, and many believe it is an open question whether the knowledge painfully acquired by the program will be retained.

One way to make the future of HTS more secure would be to house it in an organization that is predisposed to value sociocultural knowledge. The U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) meets the requirement for an organization that is familiar with what it takes to field small, high-performing, cross-functional teams such as HTTs. USASOC commands Special Forces, which already use a female version of Human Terrain Teams as well as civil affairs and military information support operations units that would benefit from better sociocultural knowledge. USASOC is part of U.S. Special Operations Command, which is often assigned the lead for irregular warfare and has other units (for example, Navy SEALs) that use Human Terrain Teams of one sort or another. For these and other reasons, USASOC might be a good fit for HTS.

Whether or not HTS is housed in USASOC, the need for a standing program to provide sociocultural knowledge should be well recognized after a decade of difficult military operations. Some Army observers, for example, believe the need for cultural understanding is one of the "top 5" lessons learned from the post-9/11 wars.[34] If this lesson is acted upon and HTS survives, those who lead it into the future hopefully will benefit from a thorough understanding of how and why HTTs performed as they did over the past decade. In that case, it should be possible to improve both HTT performance and chances for success in future irregular warfare operations. If, however, the program cannot learn from the past, or fades away for lack of support or other reasons, it is quite likely that the future of sociocultural knowledge in the

U.S. military will be much like its past—a story of too little knowledge, obtained and disseminated at great cost, often arriving too late to ensure success. **JFQ**

This article is based on the authors' book entitled *Human Terrain Teams: An Organizational Innovation for Sociocultural Knowledge in Irregular Warfare* (Institute for World Politics Press, forthcoming).

NOTES

[1] Doyle McManus, "McManus: A smaller, smarter military: The best-equipped army in the world can still lose a war if it doesn't understand the people it's fighting," *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 2012.

[2] Leo Shane III and Kevin Baron, "Petraeus Confirmation Hearing, Live," *Stars and Stripes*, June 29, 2010.

[3] Colonel Martin P. Schweitzer, USA, Commander, 4th Brigade Combat Team/82nd Airborne, Statement Before the House Armed Services Committee, Terrorism and Unconventional Threats Subcommittee and Research and Education Subcommittee of the Science and Technology Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., Hearings on Role of the Social and Behavioral Sciences in National Security, April 24, 2008.

[4] See Jeffrey Bordin, *A Crisis of Trust and Cultural Incompatibility: A Red Team Study of Mutual Perceptions of Afghan National Security Force Personnel and U.S. Soldiers in Understanding and Mitigating the Phenomena of ANSF-Committed Fratricide-Murders*, May 12, 2011, available at <www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB370/docs/Document%2011.pdf>.

[5] For an explanation of the variables, see James Douglas Orton with Christopher J. Lamb, "Interagency National Security Teams: Can Social Science Contribute?" *PRISM* 2, no. 2 (March 2011), 47–64.

[6] See Cindy R. Jebb, Laurel J. Hummel, and Tania M. Chacho, *Human Terrain Team Trip Report: A "Team of Teams,"* unpublished report prepared by the U.S. Military Academy's Interdisciplinary Team in Iraq for U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) G2 (Intelligence), 2008; Paul Joseph, *Changing the Battle Space? How Human Terrain Teams Define "Success" in Iraq and Afghanistan*, paper prepared for the Seventh Interdisciplinary Conference on War and Peace, Prague, Czech Republic, April 30–May 2, 2010; Yvette Clinton et al., *Congressionally Directed Assessment of the Human Terrain System* (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, November 2010); Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), *Contingency Capabilities: Analysis of Human Terrain Teams in Afghanistan—Draft Final Report,* December 2011; Jack A. Jackson et al., *Contingency Capabilities: Analysis of Human Terrain Teams in Afghanistan, Draft Final Report,* IDA Paper P-4-4809 (Alexandria, VA: IDA, December 2011).

[7] Sharon Hamilton, "HTS Director's Message," *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (October–December 2011).

[8] U.S. National Research Council, *Experimentation and Rapid Prototyping in Support of Counterterrorism* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2009), 22.

[9] Robert H. Scales, Jr., "Army Transformation: Implications for the Future," testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Washington, DC, July 15, 2004.

[10] Montgomery McFate and Steve Fondacaro, "Reflections on the Human Terrain System During the First 4 Years," *PRISM* 2, no. 4 (September 2011), 67.

[11] "Authorization to Release Joint IED Defeat Organization [JIEDDO] Funds for Human Terrain System," memorandum for record, signed by JIEDDO Director Montgomery C. Meigs, June 12, 2006.

[12] *The Human Terrain System Yearly Report 2007–2008*, 5–7. Document in authors' possession.

[13] Ibid., 155, 236–237.

[14] Robert M. Gates, "Landon Lecture," Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, November 26, 2007.

[15] American Anthropological Association (AAA), "American Anthropological Association's Executive Board Statement on the Human Terrain System Project," October 31, 2007; Sharon Weinberger, "Gates: Human Terrain Teams Going Through 'Growing Pains,'" *Wired*, April 15, 2008.

[16] TRADOC, Office of Internal Review and Audit Compliance, results briefing, May 12, 2010, attached as appendix G to Clinton et al., 237–250.

[17] Steve Fondacaro, former HTS program manager, interview by authors, October 25, 2011.

[18] TRADOC, Office of Internal Review and Audit Compliance, results briefing, May 12, 2010, attached as appendix G to Clinton et al., 237–250.

[19] AAA; Zenia Helbig, *Personal Perspective on the Human Terrain System Program*, delivered at the AAA's annual conference, November 29, 2007; Fawzia Sheikh, "Army to Boost Human Terrain Team Effort Despite Growing Pains," *Inside the Army* 20, no. 22 (June 2008).

[20] Editorial, "A Social Contract: Efforts to Inform U.S. Military Policy with Insights from the Social Sciences Could be a Win-Win Approach," *Nature* 454, July 10, 2008, 138; Editorial, "Failure in the field: The US Military's Human-Terrain Programme Needs to be Brought to a Swift Close," *Nature* 456, December 11, 2008, 676.

[21] H.R. 2647, *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010*, 111th Cong. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 155.

[22] John McHugh, "Transcript: Defense Writers Group," A Project of the Center for Media and Security, New York and Washington, DC, March 31, 2010, 10.

[23] "Appendix F: Position Descriptions for Human Terrain Teams," documents include a February 2, 2010, job classification date; attached as appendix G to Clinton et al., 221–236.

[24] Ironically, what is publically known about these investigations substantiated HTS management's view that elements of TRADOC responsible for contracting and personnel hiring performed poorly. See Clinton et al., 42, 135, appendix G.

[25] HTS established new "policies and procedures in areas as diverse as ethical certification, human resources, peer product review, civilian evaluations, team product quality control, and individual position qualification." See Hamilton.

[26] Joanne Kimberlin, "Part 4: In the Enemy's Lair, Fighting for Afghanistan's Future," *The Virginian Pilot*, September 29, 2010.

[27] U.S. Special Operations Command had some classified programs related to human terrain under way earlier.

[28] Jebb, Hummel, Chacho, 3; Clinton et al., 153; data obtained from S.K. Numrich, IDA, email on April 18, 2012.

[29] Arthur Speyer and Job Henning, "MCIA's Cultural Intelligence Methodology and Lessons Learned," in *Socio-Cultural Perspectives: A New Intelligence Paradigm,* Report on the Conference at the MITRE Corporation, McLean, Virginia, September 12, 2006, ed. LeeEllen Friedland, Gary W. Shaeff, and Jessica Glicken Turnley, Document Number 07-1220, Technical Report MTR070244 (McLean, VA: MITRE, 2007).

[30] Michael T. Flynn, Matt Pottinger, and Paul Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2010), 9, 12.

[31] Ibid., 17.

[32] Not all unit commanders have embraced or supported a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign plan for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The debate over its value continues to the present day. See Elisabeth Bumiller, "West Point Is Divided on a War Doctrine's Fate," *The New York Times*, May 27, 2012.

[33] See Christopher J. Lamb, Matthew Schmidt, and Berit Fitzsimmons, *MRAPs, Irregular Warfare, and Pentagon Reform*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, Occasional Paper 6 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2009).

[34] Colonel Robert Forrester, deputy director of the Center for Army Lessons Learned, cited in Drew Brooks, "Lessons Learned in Iraq War Will Apply in Future Conflicts," *The Fayetteville Observer*, January 1, 2012.